WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A system for generating an alert in a video surveillance unit, the system comprising:

access means for accessing sequences of digital images;

pattern recognition means for recognizing an entity in at least one digital image from the sequences of digital images;

rule application means for applying rules relating to entities potentially appearing in the at least one digital image, the rules pertaining to at least one entity; and

means for generating the alert responsive to the at least one digital image satisfying one or more of the rules.

2.   The system of claim 1, wherein the rules include a rule specifying the generation of the alert when the entity in the at least one digital image is recognized by the pattern recognition means as corresponding to a tracked entity.

3.   The system of claim 1, wherein the rules include a rule specifying the generation of the alert when two entities in a first digital image are recognized by the pattern recognition means as being entities to be tracked, and only one of those entities is recognized as being in a subsequent second digital image.

4.   The system of claim 1, wherein the rules include a rule specifying the generation of the alert when an entity is recognized by the pattern recognition means as being in the at least one digital image corresponding to an area in which the entity is not supposed to be.

5.   The system of claim 1, wherein the rules include a rule specifying the generation of the alert when a first entity is recognized by the pattern recognition means as being in a first digital image, and the first entity and a second entity are recognized by the pattern recognition means as being in a subsequent second digital image.

6.   The system of claim 1, wherein the rules include a rule where, when the pattern recognition means recognizes a first entity in the at least one digital image, a search is initiated to look for a second entity in other digital images.

7.   The system of claim 6, wherein the rule further specifics the generation of the alert if the second entity is recognized by the pattern recognition means as being within at least one of the other digital images.

8.   The system of claim 1, wherein the rules include a rule where the generation of the alert is specified when a first condition is satisfied at a first time, and a second condition is satisfied at a second time different from the first time.